



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 106042

DfES Number: 518614

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	09/02/2004
Inspector Name	Pauline Margaret Whiter

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	St Thomas Methodist Pre-School
Setting Address	St Thomas Methodist Churchhall Cowick Street Exeter Devon EX4 1JE

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of St Thomas Methodist Pre School Committee
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	St Thomas Methodist Pre School Committee
Address	St Thomas Methodist Churchhall Cowick Street Exeter Devon EX4 1JE

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

St Thomas Methodist Pre-school is registered to provide sessional day care for 24 children from 3 to 5 years. It is managed by a voluntary committee and was established over 30 years ago. The pre-school is open during term time from 09:30 to 12:00 every weekday morning. There are 33 children on the register and 30 are in receipt of funded education. Five care staff and an administrator are employed. The deputy playleader is qualified to NVQ level 3 in early years and is currently acting playleader. Other staff are qualified to NVQ level 2 or are working towards qualification at level 2 or 3. The pre-school operates in ground floor rooms of St Thomas Methodist Church, in a busy residential area of Exeter close to shops, parks, and schools. The pre-school has exclusive use of two interconnecting playrooms during sessions. Toilet facilities are close to the playrooms and there is a separate kitchen. There is an enclosed grass play area at the rear of the building. The pre-school has experience of supporting children who speak English as an additional language and children who have special needs. The Pre-school Learning Alliance and a Foundation Stage advisory teacher provide advice and support to the staff and committee.

How good is the Day Care?

St Thomas Methodist Pre-school provides satisfactory care for children. The staff enjoy working with children and they get to know individual children well. They plan a wide range of interesting activities and children are generally well-occupied. The grouping of the children and the deployment of staff are not always organised well to help children gain the most from the sessions. At times children's concentration and behaviour is adversely affected and there is some inconsistency in management of behaviour.

The premises are bright and spacious, well-maintained and equipped with a good range of toys and resources. Staff are very aware of their responsibility to keep children safe and secure and they follow good security routines. Although they regularly review the safety of the premises, carrying out risk assessments and generally taking appropriate action, all identified risks have not been addressed.

Staff are very well-informed on children's individual care needs and they make good arrangements to meet children's health and dietary requirements.

Committee and staff changes have resulted in weaknesses in the overall management and organisation of the pre-school. Some regulations in relation to personnel and procedures are not met. Some of the policies and procedures which are in place are limited in their effectiveness as they are unclear or lacking in detail and are not shared with parents.

Staff offer a friendly welcome to parents and they provide them with clear information on the children's activities. Staff communicate well with parents and use records appropriately to ensure that they are well-informed on parental wishes in relation to their children's care.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the preschool was asked to; improve security arrangements at arrival and collection time; to establish written procedures for complaints and for lost and uncollected children; and, to review the child protection procedures. The preschool has addressed the first matter very well and by reviewing and altering the routines and door fastenings have increased security for the children. The required procedures are now in place, apart from that for uncollected children and this should be addressed so that staff are clear how to act in children's best interests in such circumstances. The procedures for child protection and for complaints require more clarity and detail in order to be fully informative for staff and parents and ultimately of benefit to children.

What is being done well?

- Staff show care and concern for the children and form good relationships with them. As a result, the children are happy.
- Security arrangements are good and staff are vigilant, supervising children well at all times.
- Staff maintain good standards of hygiene in the pre-school.
- Staff work hard to successfully create a bright and attractive environment through the arrangement of the furniture and equipment and the use of displays of children's work and learning posters.
- Children have good access to resources, enabling them to develop independence as they select toys, help themselves to drinking water, wash and dry their hands and put on their aprons.

What needs to be improved?

- the detail and clarity of the child protection policy to reflect the most recent guidance
- the clarity of the complaints procedure so that parents know they can refer to

the regulatory body

- procedures for staff to follow in the event of children not being collected
- systems for ensuring that Ofsted is informed of significant changes and events, including committee changes
- the safety of the playrooms to minimise risks associated with the heating system
- the provision of information to parents on the policies and procedures that are followed
- the management of children's behaviour, so that all staff understand and follow appropriate strategies to encourage good behaviour.

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person must take the following actions by the date shown

Std	Action	Date
1	Ensure Ofsted is informed of significant events and changes.	10/02/2004
14	Review policies and procedures for child protection, complaints, and uncollected children and ensure that they and other policies are shared with parents.	30/04/2004

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
6	Take steps to minimise safety hazards associated with the heating system.
11	Review the policy for behaviour management and ensure it is shared with all adults working with children.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

St Thomas Methodist Pre-School provides acceptable nursery education where children's progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses in the provision.

The pre-school has recently undergone major changes in staffing, which have resulted in significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Staff are generally inexperienced and lack a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Some activities, including free play sessions and some small group sessions, are well organised and resourced, but planning is not systematically linked to the early learning goals and is not informed by assessments. Learning objectives are often unclear to staff and large group activities lack purpose, resulting in occasional poor behaviour. Staff are not effectively deployed to enhance children's learning in everyday routines and activities, especially in mathematics and literacy. They do not sufficiently challenge those children who are more able.

Leadership and management of the group have significant weaknesses. The Acting Chair and Deputy Supervisor are committed to working together to improve the provision, but recent changes and loss of expertise have reduced the effectiveness of leadership and management. Staff training needs have not been adequately addressed and there is not yet a clear vision for the future.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Parents are given detailed information about its activities and themes, so that they are able to contribute to their child's learning. Settling-in procedures are well established and appreciated by parents. There are frequent and effective informal communications between parents and key workers, but there is no formal system for sharing information with parents about their child's development.

What is being done well?

- Children make good progress in some aspects of personal, social and emotional development. They concentrate very well in appropriately organised sessions, communicate effectively and learn to share and take turns.
- Children confidently try new activities, design, make and investigate, in a variety of contexts. Staff provide a good range of resources and encourage children to explore freely.
- In free play sessions, children can access a good range of activities, which allow them to make choices and begin to progress in some areas of learning. Some small group sessions are well-planned and focused, engaging children's interest and promoting learning.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's understanding of the early learning goals and the use of assessments, so that appropriate and challenging activities can be planned for all children
- long-term planning, to ensure that all early learning goals are covered, and short-term planning, to include details of appropriate groupings, deployment of staff and clear learning objectives
- the use of everyday routines and activities to extend children's understanding of mathematical ideas, especially comparing numbers and calculation
- opportunities for children to use writing for different purposes, such as in role play or recording their experiences, and to learn letter sounds and shapes
- the use of books and stories to encourage children to choose to share books
- staff interactions with children, to promote and extend their learning, especially with more able children.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The group has made limited progress in addressing the points for consideration raised at the last inspection. There were no key issues at the last inspection, but three points for development were identified. Long-term planning is currently under review by the Deputy Supervisor, but it is not yet operational and coverage of all early learning goals has not yet been achieved. Recent changes of staff and committee have affected continuity in this process.

Medium and short-term planning systems are not yet related directly to the early learning goals and planning for mathematics and communication, language and literacy lacks clarity and fails to identify key learning objectives.

A system has been introduced for recording children's progress in relation to the stepping stones and staff have begun to make systematic observations of children, but this information is not yet used to inform planning.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are keen to explore and investigate and they develop good concentration skills in free play and some small group sessions. They communicate confidently with each other and with adults. They make good progress in their personal independence, choosing activities and spontaneously adopting good hygiene routines. They share and take turns very well. In large group activities, such as 'mat time', children lack concentration and are unsure how to behave.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children use language confidently to communicate and to describe their actions. Able children talk meaningfully about their experiences and imaginative play, when encouraged to do so. Children's progress in early reading and writing is limited. They do not choose to look at or share books. They do not write for different purposes and they make little progress in relating sounds to letters. They attempt to write their names, but do not form letters correctly.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children learn to use number names and to recite numbers in a variety of everyday routines. They recognise and name some two-dimensional shapes and sometimes use mathematical language to describe size and direction. Progress with counting and recognising numerals is limited. Children do not develop one-to-one correspondence through practical activities, nor do they calculate, compare numbers or associate numerals with sets of items. Able children do not extend their mathematical understanding.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children explore natural phenomena, such as ice and frost and they learn about changes in materials, through cooking and technology. They design and make objects successfully, using a variety of resources, and begin to understand how to join different materials. They gain some understanding of other cultures, such as Korea, but do not often build on their own experiences to develop a sense of time and place. Their progress in technology is limited.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children develop good fine motor skills, using pencils, scissors, cutters and other small equipment, with increasing control and accuracy. They move confidently indoors and show an awareness of space. They develop their gross motor skills through outdoor activities in the summer, but this is limited in the winter. They know about the importance of eating healthily and they develop good hygiene routines, washing their hands spontaneously at appropriate times.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children enthusiastically explore colour, texture and shape through a variety of craft activities. They use their senses effectively in science activities, such as investigating crushed ice. They sing familiar songs and play rhythms on musical instruments. They use their imagination in art, crafts, role play and small world play, but their progress is sometimes limited by a lack of adult intervention in imaginative and creative play.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses. The next inspection will take place in one to two years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- ensure that staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, including children's development in relation to the stepping stones.
- introduce effective planning systems, which ensure coverage of the early learning goals and identify appropriate organisation of activities and clear learning objectives.
- use practical and everyday activities to develop children's counting, comparing and calculation skills and their understanding of shape and space.
- provide daily opportunities for children to share and enjoy books, experiment with writing and learn to link letter names and sounds.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.